EVERYBODY’S BUSINESS IS NOBODY’S BUSINESS

or,

PRIVATE ABUSES, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES:

EXEMPLIFIED

In the Pride, Insolence, and exorbitant Wages of our Women, Servants, Footmen, &c.

WITH

A Proposal for Amendment of the same; as also for clearing the Streets of those Vermin called Shoe-Cleaners, and substituting in their stead many Thousands of industrious Poor, now ready to starve. With divers other Hints of great Use to the Public.

Humbly submitted the Consideration of our Legislature, and the careful Perusal of all Masters and Mistresses of Families.

BY ANDREW MORETON, Esq.

The Fifth Edition, with the Addition of a Preface.

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THE PREFACE

Since this little book appeared in print, it has had no less than three answers, and fresh attacks are daily expected from the powers of Grub-street; but should threescore antagonists more arise, unless they say more to the purpose than the forementioned, they shall not tempt me to reply.

Nor shall I engage in a paper war, but leave my book to answer for itself, having advanced nothing therein but evident truths, and incontestible matters of fact.

The general objection is against my style; I do not set up for an author, but write only to be understood, no matter how plain.

As my intentions are good, so have they had the good fortune to meet with approbation from the sober and substantial part of mankind; as for the vicious and vagabond, their ill-will is my ambition.

It is with uncommon satisfaction I see the magistracy begin to put the laws against vagabonds in force with the utmost vigour, a great many of those vermin, the japanners, having lately been taken up and sent to the several work-houses in and about this city; and indeed high time, for they grow every day more and more pernicious.

My project for putting watchmen under commissioners, will, I hope, be put in practice; for it is scarce safe to go by water unless you know your man.

As for the maid-servants, if I undervalue myself to take notice of them, as they are pleased to say, it is because they overvalue themselves so much they ought to be taken notice of.

This makes the guilty take my subject by the wrong end, but any impartial reader may find, I write not against servants, but bad servants; not against

wages, but exorbitant wages, and am entirely of the poet’s opinion,

> The good should meet with favour and applause,
> The wicked be restrain’d by wholesome laws.

The reason why I did not publish this book till the end of the last sessions of parliament was, because I did not care to interfere with more momentous affairs; but leave it to the consideration of that august body during this recess, against the next sessions, when I shall exhibit another complaint against a growing abuse, for which I doubt not but to receive their approbation and the thanks of all honest men.

EVERYBODY’S BUSINESS IS NOBODY’S BUSINESS

This is a proverb so common in everybody’s mouth, that I wonder nobody has yet thought it worth while to draw proper inferences from it, and expose those little abuses, which, though they seem trifling, and as it were scarce worth consideration, yet, by insensible degrees, they may become of injurious consequence to the public; like some diseases, whose first symptoms are only trifling disorders, but by continuance and progression, their last periods terminate in the destruction of the whole human fabric.

In contradiction therefore to this general rule, and out of sincere love and well meaning to the public, give me leave to enumerate the abuses insensibly crept in among us, and the inconveniences daily arising from the insolence and intrigues of our servant-wenches, who, by their caballing together, have made their party so considerable, that everybody cries out against them; and yet, to verify the proverb, nobody has thought of, or at least proposed a remedy, although such an undertaking, mean as it seems to be, I hope will one day be thought worthy the consideration of our king, lords, and commons.

Women servants are now so scarce, that from thirty and forty shillings a year, their wages are increased of late to six, seven, nay, eight pounds per annum, and upwards; insomuch that an ordinary tradesman cannot well keep one; but his wife, who might be useful in his shop or business, must do the drudgery of household affairs; and all this because our servant-wenches are so puffed up with pride nowadays, that they never think they go fine enough: it is a hard matter to know the mistress from the maid by their dress; nay, very often the maid shall be much the finer of the two. Our woollen manufacture suffers much by this, for nothing but silks and satins will go down with our kitchen-wenches; to support which

intolerable pride, they have insensibly raised their wages to such a height as was never known in any age or nation but this.

Let us trace this from the beginning, and suppose a person has a servant-maid sent him out of the country, at fifty shillings, or three pounds a year. The girl has scarce been a week, nay, a day in her service, but a committee of servant-wenches are appointed to examine her, who advise her to raise her wages, or give warning; to encourage her to which, the herb-woman, or chandler-woman, or some other old intelligencer, provides her a place of four or five pounds a year; this sets madam cock-a-hoop, and she thinks of nothing now but vails and high wages, and so gives warning from place to place, till she has got her wages up to the tip-top.

Her neat's leathern shoes are now transformed into laced ones with high heels; her yarn stockings are turned into fine woollen ones, with silk clocks; and her high wooden pattens are kicked away for leathern clogs; she must have a hoop too, as well as her mistress; and her poor scanty linsey-woolsey petticoat is changed into a good silk one, for four or five yards wide at the least. Not to carry the description farther, in short, plain country Joan is now turned into a fine London madam, can drink tea, take snuff, and carry herself as high as the best.

If she be tolerably handsome, and has any share of cunning, the apprentice or her master's son is enticed away and ruined by her. Thus many good families are impoverished and disgraced by these pert sluts, who, taking the advantage of a young man's simplicity and unruly desires, draw many heedless youths, nay, some of good estates, into their snares; and of this we have but too many instances.

Some more artful shall conceal their condition, and palm themselves off on young fellows for gentlewomen and great fortunes. How many families have been ruined by these ladies? when the father or master of the family, preferring the flirting airs of a young prinked up strumpet, to the artless sincerity of a plain, grave, and good wife, has given his desires aloose, and destroyed soul, body, family, and estate. But they are very favourable if they wheedle nobody into matrimony, but only make a present of a small live creature, no bigger than a bastard, to some of the family, no matter who gets it; when a child is born it must be kept.

Our sessions' papers of late are crowded with instances of servant-maids robbing their places, this can be only attributed to their devilish pride; for their whole inquiry nowadays is, how little they shall do, how much they shall have.

But all this while they make so little reserve, that if they fall sick the parish must keep them, if they are out of place, they must prostitute their bodies, or starve; so that from clopping and changing, they generally proceed to whoring and thieving, and this is the reason why our streets swarm with strumpets.

Thus many of them rove from place to place, from bawdy-house to service, and from service to bawdy-house again, ever unsettled and never easy, nothing being more common than to find these creatures one week in a good family, and the next in a brothel. This amphibious life makes them fit for neither, for if the bawd uses them ill, away they trip to service, and if the mistress gives them a wry word, whip they are at a bawdy-house again, so that in effect they neither make good whores nor good servants.

Those who are not thus slippery in the tail, are light of finger; and of these the most pernicious are those who beggar you inchmeal. If a maid is a downright thief she strips you, it once, and you know your loss; but these retail pilferers waste you insensibly, and though you hardly miss it, yet your substance shall decay to such a degree, that you must have a very good bottom indeed not to feel the ill effects of such moths in your family.

Tea, sugar, wine, &c., or any such trifling commodities, are reckoned no thefts, if they do not directly take your pewter from your shelf, or your linen from your drawers, they are very honest: What harm is there, say they, in cribbing a little matter for a junket, a merry bout or so? Nay, there are those that when they are sent to market for one joint of meat, shall take up two on their master's account, and leave one by the way, for some of these maids are mighty charitable, and can make a shift to maintain a small family with what they can purloin from their masters and mistresses.

If you send them with ready money, they turn factors, and take threepence or fourpence in the shilling brokerage. And here let me take notice of one very heinous abuse, not to say petty felony, which is practised in most of

the great families about town, which is, when the tradesman gives the house-keeper or other commanding servant a penny or twopence in the shilling, or so much in the pound, for everything they send in, and which, from thence, is called poundage.

This, in my opinion, is the greatest of villanies, and ought to incur some punishment, yet nothing is more common, and our topping tradesmen, who seem otherwise to stand mightily on their credit, make this but a matter of course and custom. If I do not, says one, another will (for the servant is sure to pick a hole in the person's coat who shall not pay contribution). Thus this wicked practice is carried on and winked at, while receiving of stolen goods, and confederating with felons, which is not a jot worse, is so openly cried out against, and severely punished, witness Jonathan Wild.

And yet if a master or mistress inquire after anything missing, they must be sure to place their words in due form, or madam huffs and flings about at a strange rate, What, would you make a thief of her? Who would live with such mistrustful folks? Thus you are obliged to hold your tongue, and sit down quietly by your loss, for fear of offending your maid, forsooth!

Again, if your maid shall maintain one, two, or more persons from your table, whether they are her poor relations, countryfolk, servants out of place, shoe-cleaners, charwomen, porters, or any other of her menial servants, who do her ladyship's drudgery and go of her errands, you must not complain at your expense, or ask what has become of such a thing, or such a thing; although it might never so reasonably be supposed that it was altogether impossible to have so much expended in your family; but hold your tongue for peace sake, or madam will say, You grudge her victuals; and expose you to the last degree all over the neighbourhood.

Thus have they a salve for every sore, cheat you to your face, and insult you into the bargain; nor can you help yourself without exposing yourself, or putting yourself into a passion.

Another great abuse crept in among us, is the giving of veils to servants; this was intended originally as an encouragement to such as were willing and handy, but by custom and corruption it is now grown to be a thorn in our sides, and, like other good things, abused, does more harm than good;

for now they make it a perquisite, a material part of their wages, nor must their master give a supper, but the maid expects the guests should pay for it, nay, sometimes through the nose. Thus have they spirited people up to this unnecessary and burthensome piece of generosity unknown to our forefathers, who only gave gifts to servants at Christmas-tide, which custom is yet kept into the bargain; insomuch that a maid shall have eight pounds per annum in a gentleman's or merchant's family. And if her master is a man of free spirit, who receives much company, she very often doubles her wages by her veils; thus having meat, drink, washing, and lodging for her labour, she throws her whole income upon her back, and by this means looks more like the mistress of the family than the servant-wench.

And now we have mentioned washing, I would ask some good housewifely gentlewoman, if servant-maids wearing printed linens, cottons, and other things of that nature, which require frequent washing, do not, by enhancing the article of soap, add more to housekeeping than the generality of people would imagine? And yet these wretches cry out against great washes, when their own unnecessary dabs are very often the occasion.

But the greatest abuse of all is, that these creatures are become their own lawgivers; nay, I think they are ours too, though nobody would imagine that such a set of slatterns should bamboozle a whole nation; but it is neither better nor worse, they hire themselves to you by their own rule.

That is, a month's wages, or a month's warning; if they don't like you they will go away the next day, help yourself how you can; if you don't like them, you must give them a month's wages to get rid of them.

This custom of warning, as practised by our maid-servants, is now become a great inconvenience to masters and mistresses. You must carry your dish very upright, or miss, forsooth, gives you warning, and you are either left destitute, or to seek for a servant; so that, generally speaking, you are seldom or never fixed, but always at the mercy of every new comer to divulge your family affairs, to inspect your private life, and treasure up the sayings of yourself and friends. A very great confinement, and much complained of in most families.

Thus have these wenches, by their continual plotting and cabals, united themselves into a formidable body, and got the whip hand of their betters; they make their own terms with us; and two servants now, will scarce undertake the work which one might perform with ease; notwithstanding which, they have raised their wages to a most exorbitant pitch; and, I doubt not, if there be not a stop put to their career, but they will bring wages up to 201. per annum in time, for they are much about half way already.

It is by these means they run away with a great part of our money, which might be better employed in trade, and what is worse, by their insolent behaviour, their pride in dress, and their exorbitant wages, they give birth to the following inconveniences.

First, They set an ill example to our children, our apprentices, our covenant servants, and other dependants, by their saucy and insolent behaviour, their pert, and sometimes abusive answers, their daring defiance of correction, and many other insolences which youth are but too apt to imitate.

Secondly, By their extravagance in dress, they put our wives and daughters upon yet greater excesses, because they will, as indeed they ought, go finer than the maid; thus the maid striving to outdo the mistress, the tradesman's wife to outdo the gentleman's wife, the gentleman's wife emulating the lady, and the ladies one another; it seems as if the whole business of the female sex were nothing but an excess of pride, and extravagance in dress.

Thirdly, The great height to which women-servants have brought their wages, makes a mutiny among the men-servants, and puts them upon raising their wages too; so that in a little time our servants will become our partners; nay, probably, run away with the better part of our profits, and make servants of us *vice versa*. But yet with all these inconveniences, we cannot possibly do without these creatures; let us therefore cease to talk of the abuses arising from them, and begin to think of redressing them. I do not set up for a lawgiver, and therefore shall lay down no certain rules, humbly submitting in all things to the wisdom of our legislature. What I offer shall be under correction; and upon conjecture,

my utmost ambition being but to give some hints to remedy this growing evil, and leave the prosecution to abler hands.

And first it would be necessary to settle and limit their wages, from forty and fifty shillings to four and five pounds per annum, that is to say, according to their merits and capacities; for example, a young unexperienced servant should have forty shillings per annum, till she qualifies herself for a larger sum; a servant who can do all household work, or, as the good women term it, can take her work and leave her work, should have four pounds per annum; and those who have lived seven years in one service, should ever after demand five pounds per annum, for I would very fain have some particular encouragements and privileges given to such servants who should continue long in a place; it would incite a desire to please, and cause an emulation very beneficial to the public.

I have heard of an ancient charity in the parish of St. Clement's Danes, where a sum of money, or estate, is left, out of the interest or income of which such maid-servants, who have lived in that parish seven years in one service, receive a reward of ten pounds apiece, if they please to demand it.

This is a noble benefaction, and shows the public spirit of the donor; but everybody's business is nobody's; nor have I heard that such reward has been paid to any servant of late years. A thousand pities a gift of that nature should sink into oblivion, and not be kept up as an example to incite all parishes to do the like.

The Romans had a law called *Jus Trium Liberorum*, by which every man who had been a father of three children, had particular honours and privileges. This incited the youth to quit a dissolute single life and become fathers of families, to the support and glory of the empire.

In imitation of this most excellent law, I would have such servants, who should continue many years in one service, meet with singular esteem and reward.

The apparel of our women-servants should be next regulated, that we may know the mistress from the maid. I remember I was once put very much to the blush, being at a friend's house, and by him required to salute the ladies, I kissed the chamber-jade into the bargain, for she was as well

dressed as the best. But I was soon undeceived by a general titter, which gave me the utmost confusion; nor can I believe myself the only person who has made such a mistake.

Things of this nature would be easily avoided, if servant-maids were to wear liveries, as our footmen do; or obliged to go in a dress suitable to their station. What should ail them, but a jacket and petticoat of good yard-wide stuff, or calimanco, might keep them decent and warm.

Our charity children are distinguished by their dress, why then may not our women-servants? why may they not be made frugal per force, and not suffered to put all on their backs, but obliged to save something against a rainy day? I am, therefore, entirely against servants wearing of silks, laces, and other superfluous finery; it sets them above themselves, and makes their mistresses contemptible in their eyes. I am handsomer than my mistress, says a young prinked up baggage, what pity it is I should be her servant, I go as well dressed, or better than she. This makes the girl take the first offer to be made a whore, and there is a good servant spoiled; whereas, were her dress suitable to her condition, it would teach her humility, and put her in mind of her duty.

Besides the fear of spoiling their clothes makes them afraid of household-work; so that in a little time we shall have none but chambermaids and nurserymaids; and of this let me give one instance; my family is composed of myself and sister, a man and a maid; and, being without the last, a young wench came to hire herself. The man was gone out, and my sister above stairs, so I opened the door myself; and this person presented herself to my view, dressed completely, more like a visitor than a servant-maid; she, not knowing me, asked for my sister; pray, madam, said I, be pleased to walk into the parlour, she shall wait on you presently. Accordingly I handed madam in, who took it very cordially. After some apology, I left her alone for a minute or two; while I, stupid wretch! ran up to my sister, and told her there was a gentlewoman below come to visit her. Dear brother, said she, don't leave her alone, go down and entertain her while I dress myself. Accordingly, down I went, and talked of indifferent affairs; meanwhile my sister dressed herself all over again, not being willing to be seen in an undress. At last she came down dressed as

clean as her visitor; but how great was my surprise when I found my fine lady a common servant-wench.

My sister understanding what she was, began to inquire what wages she expected? She modestly asked but eight pounds a year. The next question was, what work she could do to deserve such wages? to which she answered, she could clean a house, or dress a common family dinner. But cannot you wash, replied my sister, or get up linen? she answered in the negative, and said, she would undertake neither, nor would she go into a family that did not put out their linen to wash, and hire a charwoman to scour. She desired to see the house, and having carefully surveyed it, said, the work was too hard for her, nor could she undertake it. This put my sister beyond all patience, and me into the greatest admiration. Young woman, said she, you have made a mistake, I want a housemaid, and you are a chambermaid. No, madam, replied she, I am not needlewoman enough for that. And yet you ask eight pounds a year, replied my sister. Yes, madam, said she, nor shall I bate a farthing. Then get you gone for a lazy impudent baggage, said I, you want to be a boarder not a servant; have you a fortune or estate that you dress at that rate? No, sir, said she, but I hope I may wear what I work for without offence. What you work, interrupted my sister, why you do not seem willing to undertake any work; you will not wash nor scour; you cannot dress a dinner for company; you are no needlewoman; and our little house of two rooms on a floor, is too much for you. For God's sake what can you do? Madam, replied she pertly; I know my business; and do not fear a service; there are more places than parish churches; if you wash at home, you should have a laundrymaid; if you give entertainments, you must have a cookmaid; if you have any needlework, you should have a chambermaid; and such a house as this is enough for a housemaid in all conscience.

I was pleased at the wit, and astonished at the impudence of the girl, so dismissed her with thanks for her instructions, assuring her that when I kept four maids she should be housemaid if she pleased.

Were a servant to do my business with cheerfulness, I should not grudge at five or six pounds per annum; nor would I be so unchristian to put more upon any one than they can bear; but to pray and pay too is the devil. It is very hard, that I must keep four servants or none.

In great families, indeed, where many servants are required, those distinctions of chambermaid, housemaid, cookmaid, laundrymaid, nurserymaid, &c., are requisite, to the end that each may take her particular business, and many hands may make the work light; but for a private gentleman, of a small fortune, to be obliged to keep so many idle jades, when one might do the business, is intolerable, and matter of great grievance.

I cannot close this discourse without a gentle admonition and reproof to some of my own sex, I mean those gentlemen who give themselves unnecessary airs, and cannot go to see a friend, but they must kiss and slop the maid; and all this is done with an air of gallantry, and must not be resented. Nay, some gentlemen are so silly, that they shall carry on an underhand affair with their friend's servant-maid, to their own disgrace, and the ruin of many a young creature. Nothing is more base and ungenerous, yet nothing more common, and withal so little taken notice of. D-n me, Jack, says one friend to another, this maid of yours is a pretty girl, you do so and so to her, by G-d. This makes the creature pert, vain, and impudent, and spoils many a good servant.

What gentleman will descend to this low way of intrigue, when he shall consider that he has a footboy or an apprentice for his rival, and that he is seldom or never admitted, but when they have been his tasters; and the fool of fortune, though he comes at the latter end of the feast, yet pays the whole reckoning; and so indeed would I have all such silly cullies served.

If I must have an intrigue, let it be with a woman that shall not shame me. I would never go into the kitchen, when the parlour door was open. We are forbidden at Highgate, to kiss the maid when we may kiss the mistress; why then will gentlemen descend so low, by too much familiarity with these creatures, to bring themselves into contempt?

I have been at places where the maid has been so dizzied with these idle compliments that she has mistook one thing for another, and not regarded her mistress in the least; but put on all the flirting airs imaginable. This behaviour is nowhere so much complained of as in taverns, coffeehouses, and places of public resort, where there are handsome bar-keepers, &c. These creatures being puffed up with the fulsome flattery of a set of flesh-

flies, which are continually buzzing about them, carry themselves with the utmost insolence imaginable; insomuch, that you must speak to them with a great deal of deference, or you are sure to be affronted. Being at a coffeehouse the other day, where one of these ladies kept the bar, I had bespoke a dish of rice tea; but madam was so taken up with her sparks, she had quite forgot it. I spake for it again, and with some temper, but was answered after a most taunting manner, not without a toss of the head, a contraction of the nostrils, and other impertinences, too many to enumerate. Seeing myself thus publicly insulted by such an animal, I could not choose but show my resentment. Woman, said I, sternly, I want a dish of rice tea, and not what your vanity and impudence may imagine; therefore treat me as a gentleman and a customer, and serve me with what I call for: keep your impertinent repartees and impudent behaviour for the coxcombs that swarm round your bar, and make you so vain of your blown carcase. And indeed I believe the insolence of this creature will ruin her master at last, by driving away men of sobriety and business, and making the place a den of vagabonds and rakehells.

Gentlemen, therefore, ought to be very circumspect in their behaviour, and not undervalue themselves to servant-wenches, who are but too apt to treat a gentleman ill whenever he puts himself into their power.

Let me now beg pardon for this digression, and return to my subject by proposing some practicable methods for regulating of servants, which, whether they are followed or not, yet, if they afford matter of improvement and speculation, will answer the height of my expectation, and I will be the first who shall approve of whatever improvements are made from this small beginning.

The first abuse I would have reformed is, that servants should be restrained from throwing themselves out of place on every idle vagary. This might be remedied were all contracts between master and servant made before a justice of peace, or other proper officer, and a memorandum thereof taken in writing. Nor should such servant leave his or her place (for men and maids might come under the same regulation) till the time agreed on be expired, unless such servant be misused or denied necessaries, or show some other reasonable cause for their discharge. In that case, the master or mistress should be reprimanded or fined. But if

servants misbehave themselves, or leave their places, not being regularly discharged, they ought to be amerced or punished. But all those idle, ridiculous customs, and laws of their own making, as a month's wages, or a month's warning, and suchlike, should be entirely set aside and abolished.

When a servant has served the limited time duly and faithfully, they should be entitled to a certificate, as is practised at present in the wool-combing trade; nor should any person hire a servant without a certificate or other proper security. A servant without a certificate should be deemed a vagrant; and a master or mistress ought to assign very good reasons indeed when they object against giving a servant his or her certificate.

And though, to avoid prolixity, I have not mentioned footmen particularly in the foregoing discourse, yet the complaints alleged against the maids are as well masculine as feminine, and very applicable to our gentlemen's gentlemen; I would, therefore, have them under the very same regulations, and, as they are fellow-servants, would not make fish of one and flesh of the other, since daily experience teaches us, that "never a barrel the better herring."

The next great abuse among us is, that under the notion of cleaning our shoes, above ten thousand wicked, idle, pilfering vagrants are permitted to patrol about our city and suburbs. These are called the black-guard, who black your honour's shoes, and incorporate themselves under the title of the Worshipful Company of Japanners.

Were this all, there were no hurt in it, and the whole might terminate in a jest; but the mischief ends not here, they corrupt our youth, especially our men-servants; oaths and impudence are their only flowers of rhetoric; gaming and thieving are the principal parts of their profession; japanning but the pretence. For example, a gentleman keeps a servant, who among other things is to clean his master's shoes; but our gentlemen's gentlemen are above it nowadays, and your man's man performs the office, for which piece of service you pay double and treble, especially if you keep a table, nay, you are well off if the japanner has no more than his own diet from it.

I have often observed these rascals sneaking from gentlemen's doors with wallets or hats' full of good victuals, which they either carry to their trulls,

or sell for a trifle. By this means, our butcher's, our baker's, our poulterer's, and cheesemonger's bills are monstrously exaggerated; not to mention candles just lighted, which sell for fivepence a pound, and many other perquisites best known to themselves and the pilfering villains their confederates.

Add to this, that their continual gaming sets servants upon their wits to supply this extravagance, though at the same time the master's pocket pays for it, and the time which should be spent in a gentleman's service is loitered away among these rakehells, insomuch that half our messages are ineffectual, the time intended being often expired before the message is delivered.

How many frequent robberies are committed by these japanners? And to how many more are they confederates? Silver spoons, spurs, and other small pieces of plate, are every day missing, and very often found upon these sort of gentlemen; yet are they permitted, to the shame of all our good laws, and the scandal of our most excellent government, to lurk about our streets, to debauch our servants and apprentices, and support an infinite number of scandalous, shameless trulls, yet more wicked than themselves, for not a Jack among them but must have his Gill.

By whom such indecencies are daily acted, even in our open streets, as are very offensive to the eyes and ears of all sober persons, and even abominable in a Christian country.

In any riot, or other disturbance, these sparks are always the foremost; for most among them can turn their hands to picking of pockets, to run away with goods from a fire, or other public confusion, to snatch anything from a woman or child, to strip a house when the door is open, or any other branch of a thief's profession.

In short, it is a nursery for thieves and villains; modest women are every day insulted by them and their strumpets; and such children who run about the streets, or those servants who go on errands, do but too frequently bring home some scraps of their beastly profane wit; insomuch, that the conversation of our lower rank of people runs only upon bawdy and blasphemy, notwithstanding our societies for reformation, and our laws in force against profaneness; for this lazy life gets them many proselytes,

their numbers daily increasing from runaway apprentices and footboys, insomuch that it is a very hard matter for a gentleman to get him a servant, or for a tradesman to find an apprentice.

Innumerable other mischiefs accrue, and others will spring up from this race of caterpillars, who must be swept from out our streets, or we shall be overrun with all manner of wickedness.

But the subject is so low, it becomes disagreeable even to myself; give me leave, therefore, to propose a way to clear the streets of these vermin, and to substitute as many honest industrious persons in their stead, who are now starving for want of bread, while these execrable villains live, though in rags and nastiness, yet in plenty and luxury.

I, therefore, humbly propose that these vagabonds be put immediately under the command of such taskmasters as the government shall appoint, and that they be employed, punished, or rewarded, according to their capacities and demerits; that is to say, the industrious and docible to wool-combing, and other parts of the woollen manufacture, where hands are wanted, as also to husbandry and other parts of agriculture.

For it is evident that there are scarce hands enow in the country to carry on either of these affairs. Now, these vagabonds might not only by this means be kept out of harm's way, but be rendered serviceable to the nation. Nor is there any need of transporting them beyond seas, for if any are refractory they should be sent to our stannaries and other mines, to our coal works and other places where hard labour is required. And here I must offer one thing never yet thought of, or proposed by any, and that is, the keeping in due repair the navigation of the river Thames, so useful to our trade in general; and yet of late years such vast hills of sand are gathered together in several parts of the river, as are very prejudicial to its navigation, one which is near London Bridge, another near Whitehall, a third near Battersea, and a fourth near Fulham. These are of very great hindrance to the navigation; and indeed the removal of them ought to be a national concern, which I humbly propose may be thus effected.

The rebellious part of these vagabonds, as also other thieves and offenders, should be formed into bodies under the command of proper officers, and under the guard and awe of our soldiery. These should every day at low

water carry away these sandhills, and remove every other obstruction to the navigation of this most excellent and useful river.

It may be objected that the ballast men might do this; that as fast as the hills are taken away they would gather together again, or that the watermen might do it. To the first, I answer, that ballast men, instead of taking away from these hills, make holes in other places of the river, which is the reason so many young persons are drowned when swimming or bathing in the river.

Besides, it is a work for many hands, and of long continuance; so that ballast men do more harm than good. The second objection is as silly; as if I should never wash myself, because I shall be dirty again, and I think needs no other answer. And as to the third objection, the watermen are not so public-spirited, they live only from hand to mouth, though not one of them but finds the inconvenience of these hills, every day being obliged to go a great way round about for fear of running aground; insomuch that in a few years the navigation of that part of the river will be entirely obstructed. Nevertheless, every one of these gentlemen-watermen hopes it will last his time, and so they all cry, The devil take the hindmost. But yet I judge it highly necessary that this be made a national concern, like Dagenham breach, and that these hills be removed by some means or other.

And now I have mentioned watermen, give me leave to complain of the insolences and exactions they daily commit on the river Thames, and in particular this one instance, which cries aloud for justice.

A young lady of distinction, in company with her brother, a little youth, took a pair of oars at or near the Temple, on April day last, and ordered the men to carry them to Pepper Alley Stairs. One of the fellows, according to their usual impertinence, asked the lady where she was going? She answered, near St. Olave's church. Upon which he said, she had better go through the bridge. The lady replied she had never gone through the bridge in her life, nor would she venture for a hundred guineas; so commanded him once more to land her at Pepper Alley Stairs. Notwithstanding which, in spite of her fears, threats, and commands; nay, in spite of the persuasion of his fellow, he forced her through London

Bridge, which frightened her beyond expression. And to mend the matter, he obliged her to pay double fare, and mobbed her into the bargain.

To resent which abuse, application was made to the hall, the fellow summoned, and the lady ordered to attend, which she did, waiting there all the morning, and was appointed to call again in the afternoon. She came accordingly, they told her the fellow had been there, but was gone, and that she must attend another Friday. She attended again and again, but to the same purpose. Nor have they yet produced the man, but tired out the lady, who has spent above ten shillings in coach-hire, been abused and baffled into the bargain.

It is pity, therefore, there are not commissioners for watermen, as there are for hackney coachmen; or that justices of the peace might not inflict bodily penalties on watermen thus offending. But while watermen are watermen's judges, I shall laugh at those who carry their complaints to the hall.

The usual plea in behalf of abusive watermen is, that they are drunk, ignorant, or poor; but will that satisfy the party aggrieved, or deter the offender from reoffending? Whereas were the offenders sent to the house of correction, and there punished, or sentenced to work at the sandhills aforementioned, for a time suitable to the nature of their crimes, terror of such punishments would make them fearful of offending, to the great quiet of the subject.

Now, it maybe asked, How shall we have our shoes cleaned, or how are these industrious poor to be maintained? To this I answer that the places of these vagabonds may be very well supplied by great numbers of ancient persons, poor widows, and others, who have not enough from their respective parishes to maintain them. These poor people I would have authorised and stationed by the justices of the peace or other magistrates. Each of these should have a particular walk or stand, and no other shoe-cleaner should come into that walk, unless the person misbehave and be removed. Nor should any person clean shoes in the streets, but these authorised shoe-cleaners, who should have some mark of distinction, and be under the immediate government of the justices of the peace.

Thus would many thousands of poor people be provided for, without burthening their parishes. Some of these may earn a shilling or two in the day, and none less than sixpence, or thereabouts. And lest the old japanners should appear again, in the shape of linkboys, and knock down gentlemen in drink, or lead others out of the way into dark remote places, where they either put out their lights, and rob them themselves, or run away and leave them to be pillaged by others, as is daily practised, I would have no person carry a link for hire but some of these industrious poor, and even such, not without some ticket or badge, to let people know whom they trust. Thus would the streets be cleared night and day of these vermin; nor would oaths, skirmishes, blasphemy, obscene talk, or other wicked examples, be so public and frequent. All gaming at orange and gingerbread barrows should be abolished, as also all penny and halfpenny lotteries, thimbles and balls, &c., so frequent in Moorfields, Lincoln's-inn-fields, &c., where idle fellows resort, to play with children and apprentices, and tempt them to steal their parents' or master's money.

There is one admirable custom in the city of London, which I could wish were imitated in the city and liberties of Westminster, and bills of mortality, which is, no porter can carry a burthen or letter in the city, unless he be a ticket porter; whereas, out of the freedom part of London, any person may take a knot and turn porter, till he be entrusted with something of value, and then you never hear of him more.

This is very common, and ought to be amended. I would, therefore, have all porters under some such regulation as coachmen, chairmen, carmen, &c.; a man may then know whom he entrusts, and not run the risk of losing his goods, &c. Nay, I would not have a person carry a basket in the markets, who is not subject to some such regulation; for very many persons oftentimes lose their dinners in sending their meat home by persons they know nothing of.

Thus would all our poor be stationed, and a man or woman able to perform any of these offices, must either comply or be termed an idle vagrant, and sent to a place where they shall be forced to work. By this means industry will be encouraged, idleness punished, and we shall be famed, as well as happy for our tranquillity and decorum.